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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 005128

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [LE](#) [SY](#) [KU](#)
SUBJECT: TUENI ASSASSINATION DEMARCHE DELIVERED FM SAYS
PRESSURE ON SYRIA TO INCREASE, FEARS LEBANON NOW DIVIDED

REF: A. STATE 223709

[1](#)B. BEIRUT 3956

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: During a December 14 meeting, the Ambassador shared with Kuwait FM Shaykh Dr. Mohammed U.S. views on the assassination of Gebran Tueni and encouraged the GOK to publicly condemn the murder. The FM responded that the situation in Lebanon was quite serious and said the GOK's primary concern was the "polarization" of the country. He was concerned about pro-Syria elements in Lebanon and what appeared to be an ability to strike anyone at any time. He reported GOK and GCC support for UN Security Council Resolutions and said international pressure on Syria was mounting. He said al-Asad felt the pressure, and pointed to his absence from the recent OIC conference in Mecca. He encouraged Syrian cooperation with the UN investigation and dismissed any attempt to narrow the focus of the investigation to prompt greater SARG cooperation. End Summary.

Kuwait Strongly Supports Security Council Resolutions

[1](#)2. (C) The Ambassador shared with Foreign Minister Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Al-Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah during a December 14 meeting U.S. condemnation of the assassination of Gebran Tueni and concerns about the role of Syria in recent events in Lebanon. He encouraged the GOK to issue statements similar to those released by the Secretary and President, and invited the FM's views on the situation. Shaykh Dr. Mohammed said former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and MP Gebran Tueni were very close to Kuwait. The position of Kuwait, and of the GCC as well, was to support the applicable UN Security Council resolutions. He also reported more regional pressure on Syria, citing President Bashar al-Asad's absence from the recent Organization of the Islamic Conference meeting. He cited an increase in the criticism of Syria from within Lebanon, referring to Marwan Hamada's, "the living martyr," public accusations of al-Asad's involvement in Tueni's death.

Lebanon is now Evenly Divided

[1](#)3. (C) The FM informed the Ambassador that Kuwait's primary concern was the "polarization" of Lebanon" and described the country as evenly split and said Syria's allies in Lebanon, found among Hizbollah, some elements of the Maronite community, and Amal, were not pushovers. He said they would do almost anything to shield Syria from serious international repercussions. He said Tueni's assassination sent a frightening message that Syria's sympathizers "can get you at

any time and in any place." He added that it appeared that Tueni's murder was an "inside job," commenting that the December 12 trip was unplanned.

All Eyes on the UN

¶4. (C) He further commented that people were paying close attention to the Mehlis report and what would unfold at the UN. The U.S. and French positions were clear, but it was important to watch what other permanent members, such as Russians, would do. He restated GOK concern for the stability of the Lebanese government, noting that the Shi'a bloc had suspended its participation and that other political figures had called for "governing with an international flavor" which no one understood. He asserted that Lebanon's problems could not be solved with increased financial assistance. What was needed was realpolitik on the ground.

Syria Must Cooperate

¶5. (C) Continuing with a more focused discussion on Syria, the FM lamented that things were not going well. He said the Tueni assassination increased the pressure on Syria, and the SARG must act appropriately to ease the pressure. Syria had agreed to continued cooperation with the UN investigation, but the FM said it was unclear whether such cooperation would include making more witnesses available. He was also critical of Syria's initial response to the investigation that it was an intent to destabilize the Syrian government. Shaykh Dr. Mohammed stressed that a criminal case was being investigated and speculated that the Syrians would "play ball," but not to the extent where the regime could be destabilized. He said the investigation was further

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complicated by the announcement of Mehlis' resignation. Commenting on ways to encourage SARG cooperation with the UN and international community, Shaykh Dr. Mohammed said "conspiracy theorists" in the press proffered a "Lockerbie Solution." He dismissed this proposal, saying the Lockerbie issue was fairly limited and the people would not be happy with such an approach in Lebanon.

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